

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for verifying a check, comprising:
 - scanning, at a point-of-sale location, the check to obtain data from a MICR line of the check, the data including a one-way hash value;
 - obtaining, at the point-of-sale location, customer-specific information that is not included on the check;
 - providing, from the point-of-sale location to a check verifier, the scanned data and the customer-specific information;
 - receiving, by the check verifier, the key from a source other than the point-of-sale location;
 - computing, by the check verifier, a one-way hash value based on a specific hash algorithm, the data from the MICR line, the customer-specific information, and the key; and
 - determining, by the check verifier, if the computed one-way hash value is the same as the one-way hash value obtained from the MICR line of the check.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the one-way hash value of the check is included as an n-digit field at one end of the MICR line.

3. A check verification system, comprising:

a bank;

a check printer that prints checks based on information provided thereto, the information including a MICR line that includes an ABA number of a bank and a customer account number,

wherein the check printer prints the information on the MICR line based on information provided from the bank, the information including an n-digit personal code that is not printed on the check and an l-bit key that is not printed on the check, and

wherein a p-bit hash value is provided on the MICR line based on the information provided from the bank.

4. The check verification system according to claim 3, wherein the MICR line further includes a value corresponding to a check number.

5. The check verification system according to claim 3, further comprising:

a check verifier that verifies checks based on the information on the MICR line provided to the check verifier by an entity desiring authentication of a check presented for payment, along with the l-bit key provided to the check verifier,

wherein the check verifier computes a hash value for the check based on the information on the MICR line, along with information not on the MICR line that is separately provided to the check verifier by either the bank or the entity desiring authentication of the check presented for payment.

6. A self-authenticating check, comprising:

a payor field;

a payee field;

a check amount field; and

a MICR line, said MICR line including:

an n-digit ABA number;

an m-digit customer account number;

a p-digit check number; and

an r-digit one-way hash value,

wherein the r-digit one-way hash value is computed by a one-way hash algorithm that uses the ABA number, the customer account number, the check number, a c-digit personal identification code that is not included on the MICR line, and a q-bit key that is not included on the MICR line.

